

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A method of purifying contaminated soil containing clay or silt by microorganisms, comprising

adding [[an]] a gas phase rate increasing inorganic soil-improving material to contaminated soil, the gas phase rate increasing inorganic soil-improving material being water-absorbing, and having both non-swelling and non-viscosity properties after absorbing water in contaminated soil containing clay or silt, and then

mixing the soil by agitation, so as to cause the inorganic soil-improving material to absorb pore water contained in the clay or silt,

optionally aerating by introducing injected air,

while adding microbes to the contaminated soil that degrade the contaminants contained within the contaminated soil or utilizing degradation microbes already present in the contaminated soil, thereby microbially degrading the contaminants.

2. (previously presented) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein the degradation microbes are added to the contaminated soil while not being contained by the inorganic soil-improving material.

3. (original) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein aeration is performed for the contaminated soil when the contaminant is microbially degraded.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (previously presented) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein the inorganic soil-improving material is perlite.

6. (currently amended) A method of purifying contaminated soil containing clay or silt by microorganisms, comprising the steps of:

adding ~~[[an]]~~ a gas phase rate increasing inorganic soil-improving material, the gas phase rate increasing inorganic soil-improving material being water-absorbing, and having both non-swelling and non-viscosity properties after absorbing water in contaminated soil containing clay or silt;

mixing the soil by agitation;

optionally aerating by introducing injected air; and

degrading contaminants contained in the contaminated soil by adding microbes to the contaminated soil that degrade the contaminants within the contaminated soil and/or utilizing degradation microbes already present in the contaminated soil.

7. (previously presented) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 6, wherein the degradation microbes and the inorganic soil-improving material are separately added to the contaminated soil.

8. (previously presented) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 6, wherein aeration is performed for the contaminated soil during the step of degrading contaminants.

9. (cancelled)

10. (previously presented) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 6, wherein the inorganic soil-improving material is perlite.

11. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the soil is contaminated by chlorinated organic compounds.

12. (new) The method of claim 11, wherein the chlorinated organic compounds are selected from trichloroethylene and petroleum hydrocarbons.

13. (new) The method of claim 6, wherein the soil is contaminated by chlorinated organic compounds.

14. (new) The method of claim 13, wherein the chlorinated organic compounds are selected from trichloroethylene and petroleum hydrocarbons.